LEAVE TEXT

Rider [Ryder], Sir William (*c.*1544–1611), merchant and local politician, born about 1544 in Mucklestone, Staffordshire, was the grandson of Thomas Ryther of Lynstead in Kent and the son of Thomas Ryther, or Ryder, of Mucklestone; his mother also came from Staffordshire. He was apprenticed to Thomas Burdet, a member of the Haberdashers' Company, of which he became free in 1569. He was a dealer in luxury cloths, and kept a shop in the Pawn of the Royal Exchange, the stock of which was valued at £3267 in 1592. Like many Londoners who prospered (Rider was already among the top 5 per cent of citizens in terms of his wealth by 1582), his business activities diversified. He became involved in the customs, holding the post of collector of the customs inwards from 1603 until 1610. From 1608 he enjoyed the lease of the imposts on sea coals as a member of a syndicate with Sir Thomas Bludder, John Trevor, and Marmaduke Darrell, and in the last year of his life he farmed the imposition on sugars with his son-in-law Sir Thomas Lake. He also speculated in crown lands, for example, by participating in a syndicate for the purchase and resale of £60,000-worth of lands in 1609.

For the early part of his career Rider lived in the parish of St Christopher-le-Stocks, but he seems to have moved into St Stephen Walbrook in 1599, and spent an increasing amount of time in Stepney. In 1609, shortly before his death, he inherited the manor of Leyton Grange in Low Leyton, Essex, from his financially embarrassed nephew and former apprentice, Edward Rider. He owned additional property at Greenwich, at Eythorne, and at the Mote near Maidstone in Kent, and also leased a manor at Dunmowe in Essex from the bishop of London. After serving the round of parish offices (collector for the poor in 1575–6 and churchwarden in 1580–81), he was elected to the common council for Cheapside ward in 1582. He was also active in the affairs of his livery company, serving as master on four occasions, the first in 1591. He was elected to the court of aldermen on 8 July 1591, and served successively in the wards of Bridge Without (1591–5) and Cornhill (1595–1611). His term as sheriff came in 1591–2, and he filled the office of lord mayor in 1600–01. As mayor Rider was remembered as a zealous reformer of weights and measures, seeking to establish uniform measures for sea coals, and becoming entangled in a protracted conflict with those who weighed the city's coal.

The most testing time of Rider's period of office came on Sunday 8 February 1601, when he was called from the sermon at Paul's Cross to deal with the irruption into the City of the earl of Essex at the head of about 140 followers, many of them of high rank. Essex probably planned to take the City and use it as a bargaining counter to remove his enemies from influence about the queen, but the rumours that twenty-one of the twenty-five aldermen would support him proved unfounded. Rider's strategy seems to have been to detach the earl from his followers by getting him indoors, either in his house or in that of the sheriff, Sir Thomas Smythe, and thereby giving the loyalist forces time to organize the defence of Whitehall and the City. The weeks which followed the revolt were tense, and Rider's energies were directed to surveillance and the pursuit of libellers against the now still more firmly entrenched Cecilian regime. He received the knighthood customarily given to the lord mayor in the early summer of 1601. For all the sympathy that the London élite and its favoured preachers had felt for the forward foreign policy with which Essex was associated, there was no way in which they could conceive of politics outside the framework of loyalty to the queen.

Rider's religious position seems to have been that of a conformist protestant, and there is little reason to connect him with the godly. He rebuilt the chancel of Leyton church, where he was buried. His largest charities were directed to the area where he had grown up. To the poor of Mucklestone he arranged for an annuity payable from property in Birchin Lane, London, while the inhabitants of Market Drayton were the beneficiaries of an annuity of £10 per annum to support their school for poor men's children, ‘to thend they maie by their good teaching come to be putt forth apprentices and soe become good members in the Comon wealthe’ (PRO, PROB11/118, fol. 281). Rider's bequests to charities were not, however, particularly large for a man of his wealth, and the bulk of his fortune passed to his two coheirs. He died at Leyton in September 1611, a few months after his wife, Elizabeth, the daughter of Richard Stone of Holme in Norfolk, whom he had married shortly before 1572. His

funeral was celebrated on 19 November 1611 at St Olave, Hart Street, in the City. He was buried at Low Leyton church, where a monument to him was erected. The two daughters who survived him made good marriages—Mary (1575–1642) to Sir Thomas Lake in 1591 and Susanna (1577–1640) to the lawyer Thomas Caesar in 1593. On Rider's death the gossips noted that ‘he died a richer man than ever he was esteemed’, as Lake was allegedly the beneficiary through his wife of property valued at £20,000 (Letters of John Chamberlain, 1.316). Although it was Rider's intention to divide the property equally between his two daughters, they seem to have disputed the terms of the will.

Ian W. Archer